IMPORTANT NOTICE!
The bridge 7 miles north of Vallecito Trailhead is out. Cross Vallecito Creek at your own risk.

HIKING – FOREST SERVICE
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATIONAL FOREST – SAN JUAN
RANGER DISTRICT – Columbine
Updated: June, 2009

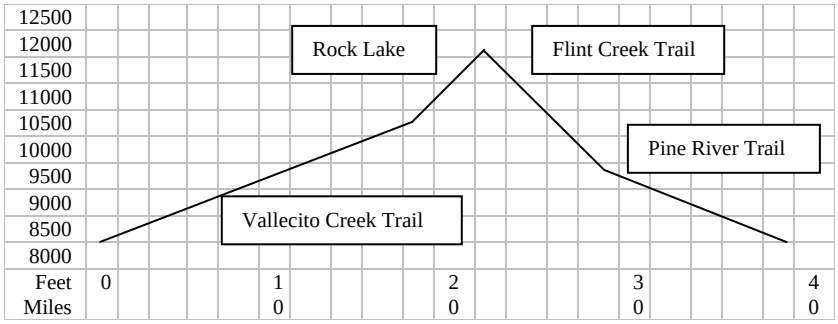
Vallecito Creek Trail #529 to Rock Creek Trail #529 to Flint Creek Trail #527 to Pine River Trail #523

Length: 38.5 mi / 62 km

Recommended Season
Spring Summer Fall Winter

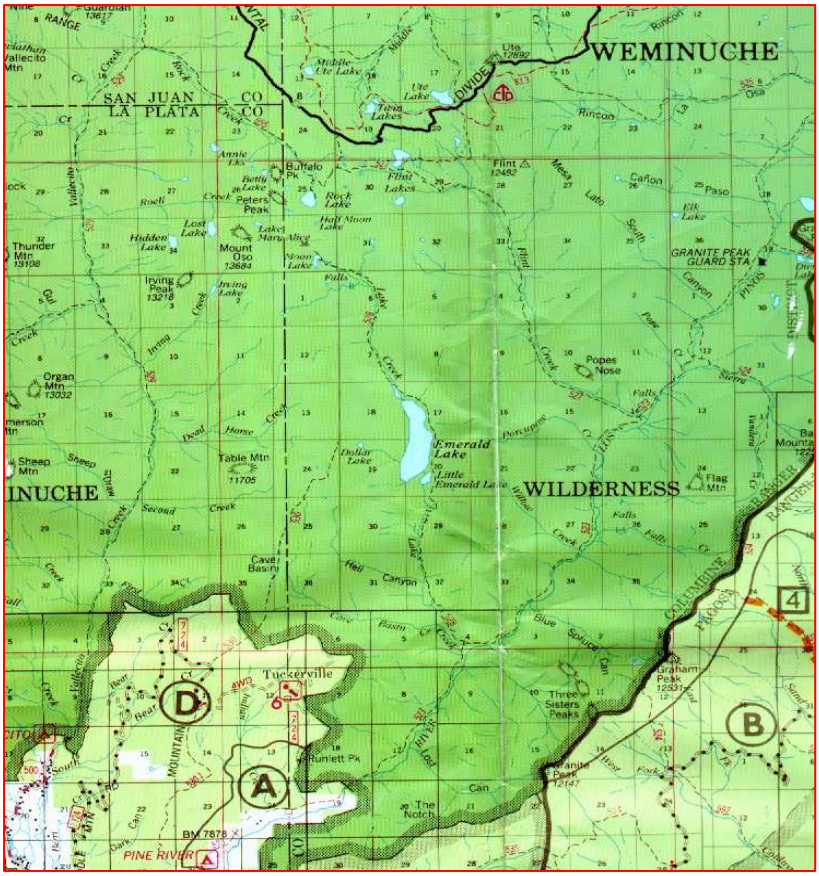
Use: Medium
Difficulty: Strenuous

USGS Map (s): Vallecito Reservoir, Columbine Pass, Storm King Peak, Rio Grande, Pyramid, Emerald Lake, Granite Peak
Starting Elevation: 8,000'
Trailhead at Vallecito Lake Campground
Ending Elevation: 8,000'
Pine River Trailhead
Highest Elevation: 12,000'



Access # 1:
From Bayfield head north on County Road (CR) #240, also called the Vallecito Road, for 7 miles until you reach CR #501. Take that road north 3 miles to Vallecito Lake and continue on the west side of the lake for an additional 7 miles to the Vallecito campground where the trailhead is located.

Access # 2:
From Durango head north on Florida Road for 9 miles until you reach CR #240. Take that road to the east 2 miles to CR #501 and continue north on #501 to Vallecito Lake. Continue on the west side of the lake for an additional 7 miles to the Vallecito campground where the trailhead is located.



Attractions & Considerations:
The Vallecito Creek Trail begins in the Vallecito campground. The hike begins in a steep canyon with ponderosa pine forest, aspen and conifers. After .6 miles you enter the Weminuche wilderness. The trail climbs gradually as you follow Vallecito Creek north. You will cross Taylor Creek, Vallecito creek, and Second Creek as you continue on through meadows and aspen groves. After 11 miles you will cross Roell Creek. Look for waterfalls, cascades, and pools as the trail steepens.

The portion of the Vallecito Creek Trail that this hike follows stays completely within the gently ascending drainage bottom. The Vallecito Creek Trail crosses the creek on a number of occasions, but all crossings are via well-constructed bridges. At approx. mile 17 take the Rock Creek Trail #655 east (note a steep 1,000' climb before trail levels off into a large meadow), and continue on the trail 5.5 miles past Rock Lake to Flint Lakes (at timberline). At this point the upper end of the Flint Creek Trail #527 joins the Rock Creek Trail. Take the Flint Creek Trail southeast – following the drainage – for 7 miles to reach the junction with the Pine River Trail #523. From there it is another 12 miles to the Pine River Trailhead.

The alpine meadows are full of blooming wildflowers in late July and in August. This area provides excellent views and photographic possibilities. Water can be found off the trail in most of the tributaries, but due to Giardia it should be filtered. As with all high altitude areas, storms can move in rapidly, bringing severe wind, lightning, rain, snow, or hail. Plan accordingly.

Fishing Considerations:
Wild rainbow, cutthroat and brook trout are found in Vallecito Creek. The fish are appropriate for the size of the stream, generally 8 to 12 inch range. Deeper water may have trout 16 inches, but they are not found often. The river offers some of the finest fly fishing found anywhere. The entire Vallecito within the Weminuche Wilderness is managed as fly-and-lure-only water, with a bag and possession 2 limit. Rock Lake is rated fair for cutthroat and Flint Lake is rated good for cutthroat. The section of the Weminuche with Rock, Flint and Moon Lakes has enough high elevation lakes in the area to keep a fisherman busy for years. Most of the lakes hold good populations of cutthroat, rainbow and brook trout.

Scan of the San Juan National Forest Map
Forest Service Maps and other publications available at the Public Lands Center in the Durango Tech Center, ½ mile west of Durango off of Highway 160 or by calling 970-247-4874.
www.sjma.org

Weminuche Wilderness Regulations:
- Group size is limited to 15 people.
- Camping is not allowed within 100 feet of any water source.
- Outfitter-guides who receive any form of compensation must obtain a special-use permit to operate on public land.
- Possession of motorized equipment and mechanized means of transport are not permitted.
- Recreational livestock are prohibited from being restrained within 100 feet of lakeshores and streams or within riparian areas.